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Letter dated 11 July 2017 from the Permanent Representatives of Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

We have the honour to refer to a letter from the Russian Federation to the Secretary-General, dated 10 May 2017 (A/71/910-S/2017/415), enclosing a document entitled "The White Helmets: fact or fiction", which contained a number of false, misleading and inaccurate allegations against the Syria Civil Defence, also known as the White Helmets.

The Syria Civil Defence is an impartial and neutral humanitarian group of nearly 3,000 volunteers. They risk their lives every day to save the lives of others by rushing to the scene of attacks to rescue people and to minimize further injury to people and damage to property — they are first responders where there are none. The White Helmets also help to deliver essential public services to the struggling civilian population whom others cannot reach. They bear witness to the systematic human rights violations and possible war crimes perpetrated by the Syrian authorities.

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic has reported extensively that the Syrian authorities and allied forces attack civilians and civilian facilities, including hospitals and schools, and, more broadly, show a disregard for civilian life and international law. As the Syrian armed forces' aerial attacks have increased over the duration of the conflict, the need for first responders to attend the scene of attacks and rescue victims in the aftermath has become essential. To date, 191 Syrian Civil Defence volunteers have been killed while providing assistance to civilians and more than 500 have sustained life-changing injuries. Many of those casualties have been caused through strikes on Syria Civil Defence facilities and the now infamous "follow-on strikes", in which aircraft conduct a second attack as soon as rescue operations begin — a tactic documented by the Commission of Inquiry that seems specifically designed to target emergency workers.

As donors to and supporters of the Syria Civil Defence, our sole interest is in training and equipping these brave volunteers to save civilian lives. The results and recognition of the White Helmets' work are well known, as illustrated by an Oscar Award-winning Netflix documentary, a 2016 Right Livelihood Award and a 2016 Franco-German Prize for Human Rights, which show the concrete work that they do and provide direct evidence contradicting these groundless claims against their

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action. As a matter of best practice we constantly review our support of any project implementer in Syria. Where problems are identified, they are investigated and appropriate action is taken.

We would appreciate your circulating the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Marc-André **Blanchard**
Permanent Representative of Canada

(*Signed*) Ib **Petersen**
Permanent Representative of Denmark

(*Signed*) François **Delattre**
Permanent Representative of France

(*Signed*) Harald **Braun**
Permanent Representative of Germany

(*Signed*) Karel Jan Gustaaf **van Oosterom**
Permanent Representative of the Netherlands

(*Signed*) Gerard **van Bohemen**
Permanent Representative of New Zealand

(*Signed*) Matthew **Rycroft**
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

(*Signed*) Nikki R. **Haley**
Permanent Representative of the United States of America